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***21 June 2007***

# **The Former McClellan Air Force Base: Taming the Beast**

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Air Force Real Property Agency  
Western Region Public Affairs Officer**

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# Agenda

- **The Beast that is McClellan**
  - **Key facts and history**
  - **History of community involvement**
- **People**
  - **Closure communities**
  - **Going beyond the legal requirements**
  - **Have the right team**
- **Community Advisory Boards**
- **Other community involvement activities**
- **Working with the media**
- **Landfills case study**



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# *Agenda*

- **ABCs of Community Involvement**
  - **A - Alleviating or addressing fears**
  - **B - Battling misconceptions**
  - **C - being Creative**
  - **D - being Dedicated, Devoted, having Daily interaction**



# Air Force Real Property Agency

## Legacy BRAC I-IV





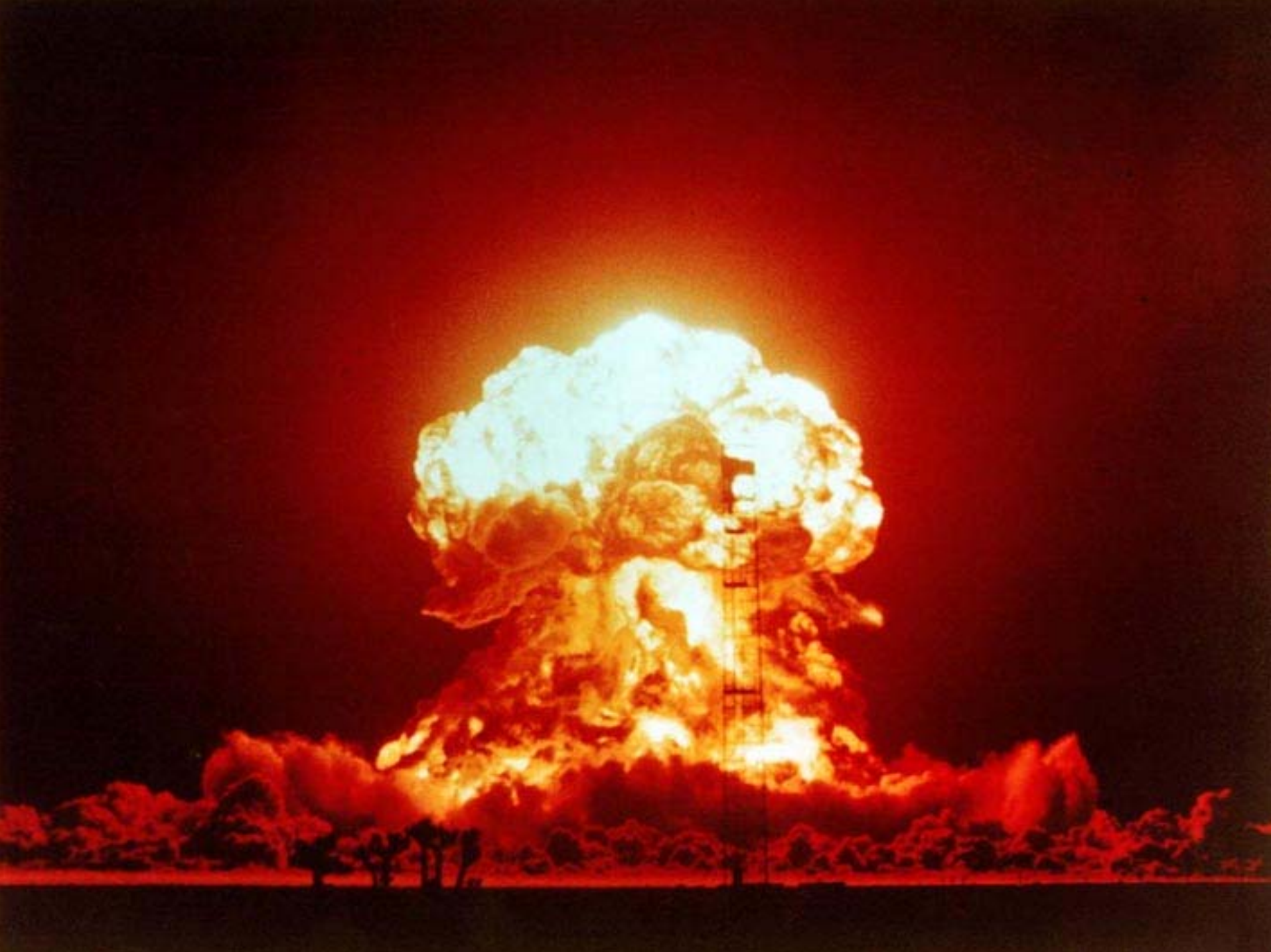


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# McClellan

- In middle of suburban city
  - 2 million people in greater Sacramento
- California prides itself in being a nationwide leader in environmental issues
- Capital City
  - Politics
  - Media







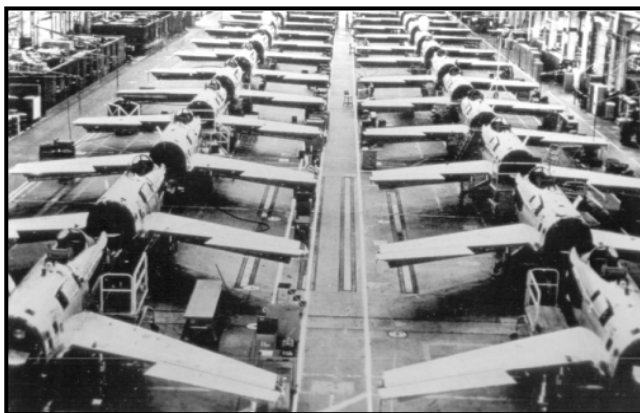




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# McClellan's Active Days

- Large industrial city – 3,000 acres
- McClellan's mission was depot repair and system management for:
  - Aircraft
  - Communications and Electronics
  - Space
- Groundbreaking: 8 Sept 1936
- Placed on Closure List in 1995
- Closure Date: 13 July 2001





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# ***Base Closure Impacts Community***

- **3<sup>rd</sup> major military base to close in Sacramento**
  - **Mather Air Force Base (1988)**
  - **Sacramento Army Depot (1995)**
- **Jobs**
- **Revenue for local businesses**
- **Community identity**
- **CA base closures impact**





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**McClellan**

## ■ Contaminants include:

- solvents (VOCs)
- metals
- pesticides
- radionuclides
- petroleum hydrocarbons
- dioxins/furans
- polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs)
- polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs)





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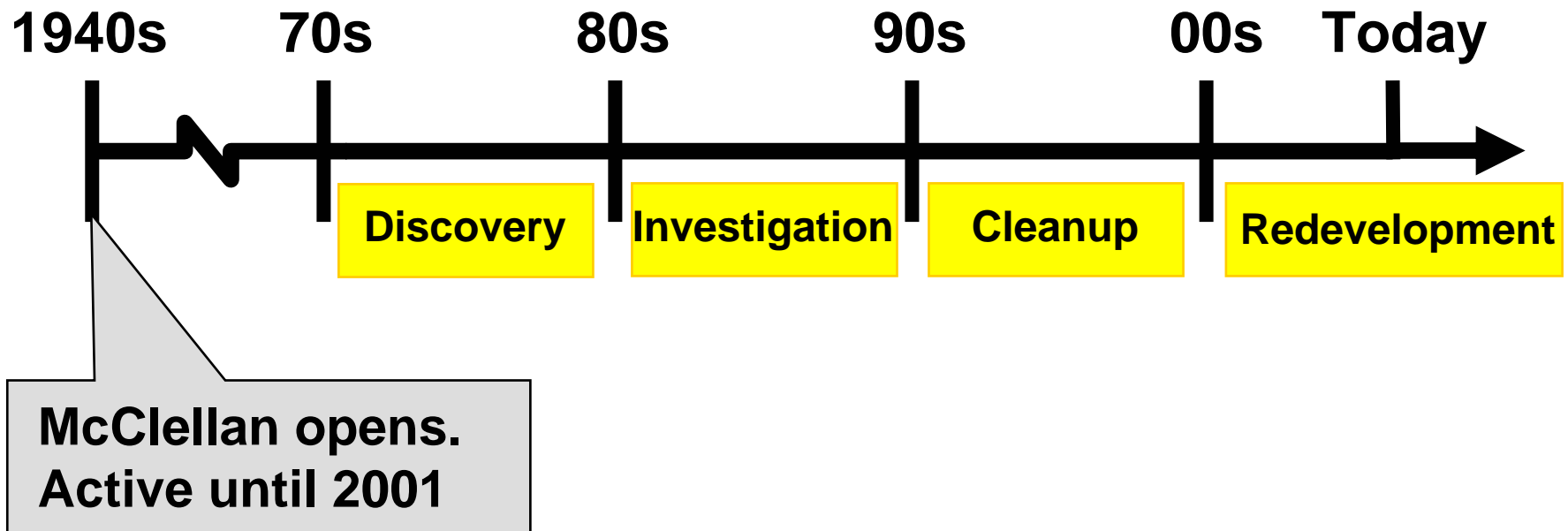
***McClellan***

- **Groundwater**
  - Large VOC plume
  - 50,000+ gallons of solvents have been removed
- **Soil**
  - 300+ soil sites
  - 1.2 million gallons of solvents have been removed
  - Several large industrial landfills
- **Landfills – large unlined industrial waste pits**
- **Radiological contamination**
  - Radium is primary concern
  - Others present



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***McClellan***



**McClellan has had a long history of  
community involvement.**



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# *People*

- **Develop relationships with community and stakeholders**
  - Neighbors
  - Redevelopment agency
  - Tenants
  - Regulatory agencies
  - Elected officials
- **Public participation in CERCLA process**
  - Public meetings
  - RABs
- **Media**



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# ***People***

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**Slick**

**vs**

**Hick**

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**Politicians**

**Letters**

**Cable access meetings**

**City chambers**

**Bullet-papers and briefings**

**Ego stroking**

**Headline wars**

**Burl and Lola**

**Coffee**

**Lunch Bunch**

**Pancake Palace**

**Listening**

**Show you care**

**Ice cream social**

**Bring all stakeholders to the same table to discuss issues**





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# Restoration Advisory Board Gone Bad

The Sacramento Bee

► METRO/REGIONAL

♦ ♦ Friday, May 12, 2000 B3

## Community panel on McClellan cleanup is dissolved

By Chris Bowman  
Bee Staff Writer

McClellan Air Force Base officials have ousted every member of a community advisory board that scrutinizes the cleanup of the heavily contaminated military installation.

"Effective May 10, 2000, the Restoration Advisory Board is dissolved," Col Charles A. Cotter, commander of the 77th Air Base Wing, said in a letter to the board's 16 community members received Thursday.

Cotter said a new board would be

formed later this year representing broader interests.

Community members on the six-year-old Restoration Advisory Board failed to achieve "a balanced and open forum for community involvement," Cotter said in explaining his decision. He cited "personal agendas that dominate the public meetings, reducing public attendance and participation significantly."

Veteran board members Thursday strongly denounced the action.

Sheila Guerra, of Antelope, argued that the diversity issue is a ruse for packing the board with people who are not likely

to be as critical of McClellan's enormous environmental restoration project.

"We have asked too many questions about the cleanup, about wasted dollars, fraud and cover-up of contamination," Guerra said.

Lt. Robert Firman, McClellan's deputy director of public affairs, said such criticisms had no bearing on the decision.

If anything, Firman said, a reformed, more diversified advisory group will be a tougher watchdog.

He said the community members mostly are base neighbors.

"They have worked long and hard for a

number of years. Now we need to include a more diverse group of stakeholders," Firman said.

Missing from the group are representatives of Sacramento County, which is overseeing the conversion of the base from military to civilian use as an industrial park, Firman said. The board also needs voices representing the businesses that will be moving onto the base, he said.

McClellan officials said the Air Force would leave it to local, state and federal representatives to form a selection committee for the new board. Applications for the volunteer positions will be reviewed

from June through August.

McClellan, a Superfund site, is one of the most polluted military bases in the nation. Beneath the base are more than 10 billion gallons of contaminated groundwater, the legacy of more than 40 years of open-pit dumping of hazardous waste.

The contamination is mostly from cancer-causing solvents that workers used to strip paint and degrease metal as they repaired airplanes. McClellan's cleanup costs could exceed \$1 billion, and pumping and treating polluted water could last decades.





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## *Today's RAB*

- New RAB reconvened with new charter in 2001
- RAB members represent their stakeholder groups
- No voting, each opinion or concern important
- Facilitator leads



*Integrity - Service - Excellence*



# ***Other Community Involvement Activities***

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- **Attend community meetings**
- **Displays at community events (Earth Day, Co. Fairs)**
- **One-on-one meetings**
- **Ice cream socials**
- **Base tours**
- **Leadership is important**
  - **You must have their support and buy-in to succeed**
  - **Community involvement is not “spin” or damage control**
  - **Help your leadership understand how you can help them reach their goals**

***“Bad news isn’t wine. It doesn’t improve with age”***

**- Colin Powell**



- **Proactive is better than reactive**
  - **Tell your story first**
  - **Be as prepared as possible for when the story hits**
    - **Anticipate and accommodate**
    - **Correct your mistakes**
    - **Correct THEIR mistakes**
- **Understand the Media**
- **Build credibility**
  - **Don't shy away from press**
  - **Be consistent**
  - **Be responsive**



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*Media*



*Integrity - Service - Excellence*



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***Media***




***Integrity - Service - Excellence***



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# Media



**MEDIA Day**  
**at McClellan**

Please join the Air Force Real Property Agency at the McClellan Groundwater Treatment Plant. Representatives from the Air Force and the Regulatory Agencies will be available to answer questions about the recently expanded groundwater treatment system at McClellan, as well as the entire cleanup program. Your attendance is greatly appreciated and we hope to see you there.

**Date:** October 27, 2005  
**Time:** 10:00 am  
**Location:** Groundwater Treatment Plant  
McClellan (Directions on back)





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# ***Landfills Case Study***

- **ABCs of Community Involvement**
  - **A - Alleviating fears**
  - **B - Battling misconceptions**
  - **C - being Creative**
  - **D – being Dedicated, Devoted, having Daily interaction**



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# ***Landfills Case Study***

- **Two main types of difficult information**
  - **Bad news**
  - **Hard to explain, technical**
- **How to address?**
  - **Bad news**
    - **Maximum Disclosure Minimum Delay**
    - **Immediate honesty**
  - **Technical**
    - **Simple**
    - **“How would I explain this to Mom?”**
    - **Keep the big picture in mind, not the nuts and bolts**
    - **Promote understanding through visualization**



***“This project will be the first instance where the Air Force has left radioactive waste in place at closure or site transfer.”***

**Robin Hook**

state health department's environmental management chief

# Toxic-pits cleanup dropped

**Air Force's plan to seal sites at old McClellan base stirs outcry over safety.**

**By Chris Bowman**  
BEE STAFF WRITER

The Defense Department plans to skip cleanup of the largest and most hazardous waste sites at the former McClellan Air Force Base as it transfers the old graves of radioactive and toxic junk to private development.

State health officials say the plan is unacceptable and are calling for the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission to intervene.

Air Force officials were surprised to find as many as 43 deteriorating barrels of high-level radioactive waste in a 2000-02 ex-

cavation of one site, according to a state health review of the proposal obtained by The Bee.

Ten more unlined waste trenches have not been exhumed, leading health authorities to question whether those pits also contain strongly radioactive plutonium, americium and cesium.

The Air Force's plan would save the federal government hundreds of millions of dollars. Rather than digging up and cleansing or removing the toxic waste, the military strategy is to cap the waste pits in perpetuity.

Air Force officials maintain this would be safe.

Yet the experts who spent the past 25 years investigating the McClellan Superfund Site say up front they do not really know

► MCCLELLAN, Page A10

## Media

**“There’s no such thing as bad press, as long as they get your name right”**

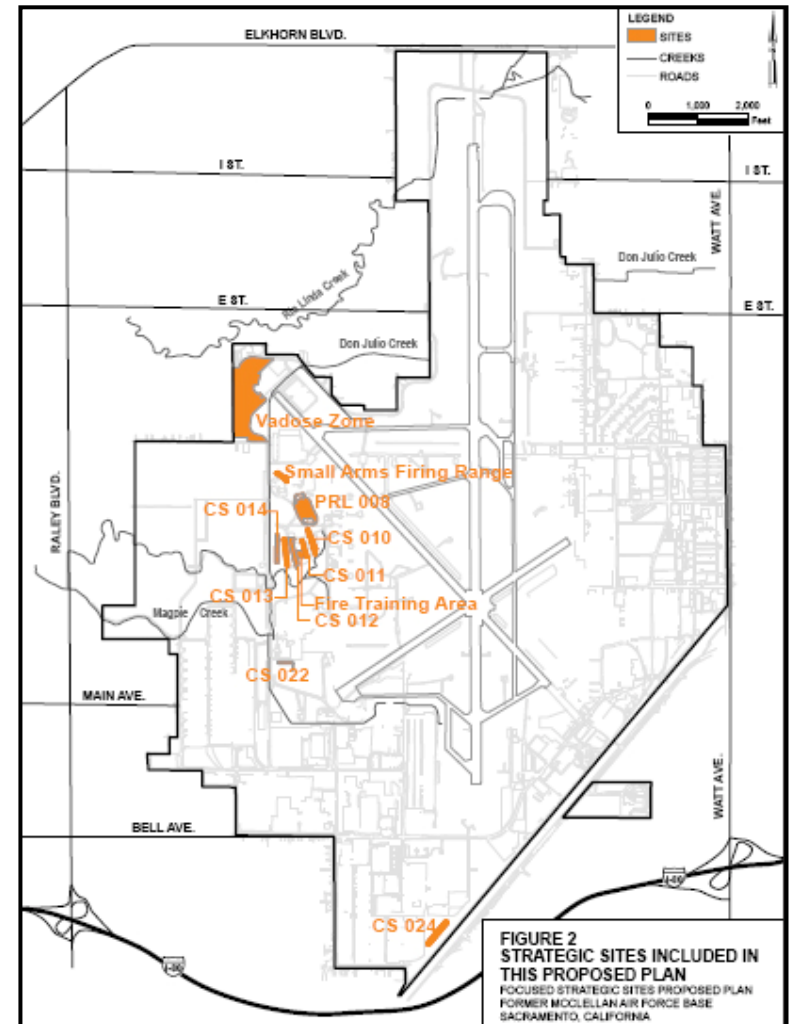
**- PT Barnum**



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# Landfills Case Study

- 11 landfill sites
- Work towards Record of Decision for 11 sites
- 9 large unlined disposal pits
- VOCs, radium, metals, PCBs...





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## Confirmed Site 10

“Jars labeled ‘Plutonium’ found”

“Lab says barrel holds plutonium”

“The McClellan monster”

“Playing with toxic fire”





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## *Landfills at McClellan*

- Despite front page headline “Toxic-pits cleanup dropped” - - **no public inquiries** - - no outcry
- This is due to a solid public involvement strategy implemented over decades
  - Consistently have answered the mail
  - Always open and transparent





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## ***Wrap-up***

- **ABC Test**
  - **Alleviated fears**
  - **Battled misconceptions**
  - **Creative**
  - **Dedicated, Devoted, Daily interaction**

**STAY THE COURSE!**



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# QUESTIONS?